

Secretary Rusk's News Conference of February 1

Press release 69 dated February 2

Secretary Rusk: I have just returned this afternoon from a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of American States at Punta del Este in Uruguay.¹ I do not have a formal and prepared statement, but I should like to make a few comments before we begin our questions.

The general subject of that meeting was the problem of Communist penetration in this hemisphere, with particular attention to the situation of Castro Cuba. Although we were very much preoccupied by the problem of Communist penetration, there was no question whatever that the foreign ministers appreciated the fact that the great tasks of the hemisphere lay not in these defensive questions but rather in the great creative effort in front of us in building in this hemisphere vital democracies which will make such penetrations impossible.

I came away from that meeting with a profound sense of the unity of the hemisphere on this problem, and of the enormous movement which has occurred in the last, say, 18 months in recognizing the nature of the problem and the importance of moving as a hemisphere to try to deal with it more adequately.

Questions Considered at Punta del Este

We had before us a number of questions. If one were to ask what the United States hoped might come out of that meeting, I might just remind you briefly of the four points that I mentioned in my opening address to the ministers of foreign affairs of the inter-American Republics. I urged first that we must recognize that the alignment of the government of Cuba with the countries of the Sino-Soviet bloc and its commitment to extend Communist power in this hemisphere are incompatible with the purposes and principles of the inter-American system and that its current activities are an ever-present and common danger to the peace and security of the continent.

Second, we urged that we should now make the policy decision to exclude the Castro regime from participation in the organs and bodies of the inter-American system. Third, that we must interrupt

¹ See p. 270.

the limited but significant flow of trade between Cuba and the rest of the hemisphere, especially in the traffic in arms. And with respect to the traffic in arms, although we know that none of the members of the hemisphere are selling arms to Cuba, traffic—illicit traffic—in arms from Cuba to other countries is going on, and we intend to interrupt that traffic. And fourth, that we should establish some cooperative machinery to make it possible for us to work together to meet political and indirect aggression mounted against the hemisphere, and in that connection we urged the establishment of a special security committee to recommend individual and collective measures to the governments of the American states.

Accomplishments of Conference

Now, from the point of view of what we hoped to accomplish, I think that these were matters which were in the minds of a great many governments, and we can report that those elements were effectively accomplished at Punta del Este. It might be of some interest to you to know what, in fact, did happen there because I am not certain that that information has been fully reported.

There was, for example, a unanimous resolution on the nature of the Communist offensive in Latin America. I think you would find that a more interesting document than most intergovernmental documents, a thoughtful and imaginative statement of the problem which makes it, I think, quite clear that Castroism is not the answer for the political or the economic development of this hemisphere of free societies.

Then, by 19 votes, we established a Special Consultative Committee on Security, working under the Council of the Organization of American States.

There was a reaffirmation of the holding of free elections. I might say that, although that might sound as though it were simply a routine reaffirmation of well-known doctrines, it was impressive to see the warmth which the conference gave to the new Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic because of the democracy in that country.

There was a unanimous reaffirmation of and stimulation to the Alliance for Progress, as free men's answer to the problem of economic and social development, rather than a Castro Communist kind of intervention.

We had some difficulty of a juridical and tech-

nical nature on the point of the exclusion of the present government of Cuba from participation in the organs and bodies of the inter-American system. I should like to comment on that just a bit because it is, I think, understandable that attention is focused on points of disagreement rather than on major points of agreement.

There was unanimity, as recorded by votes, with two general ideas. That is that Marxist-Leninism is incompatible with the inter-American system and that the present government of Cuba is incompatible with that system. In our talks, discussions, and negotiations it was entirely clear that there was unanimity on the broad notion that this incompatibility was inconsistent with or contrary to the participation of the present government of Cuba in the organs and bodies of the inter-American system.

How to give effect to that general conclusion did lead to a discussion of some very important but highly complex and highly technical juridical questions. There were moments when the remarks seemed to be well taken that there seemed to be a discourse between Sir Francis Bacon and St. Thomas Aquinas.

There were some who felt that, since there was an adequate legal base already existing, indeed, a variety of legal remedies available, there was no impairment to a policy decision that Cuba is excluded from the inter-American system or that the present government of Cuba is so excluded. There were some others who felt that there ought to be additional juridical means provided before that political decision should be taken.

There were 17 votes for the proposition that, as a consequence of repeated acts, the present government of Cuba has voluntarily placed itself outside the inter-American system. There was unanimity on the point of incompatibility. There were six abstentions on the point of the present exclusion of the present government of Cuba from participation in the inter-American system. This was not so much a question of policy as it was a question of procedure and the juridical base. But it was obvious that all those who took part recognized, fundamentally, the contradictions between Marxist-Leninism and the basic principles of our hemispheric system.

In a case where the legal problem did not seem to appear to anyone—for example, in the case of the Inter-American Defense Board, which had been created by the foreign ministers and there-

fore was at the disposal of the foreign ministers—there was unanimity that the present government of Cuba should be ousted from that Board.

In the case of economic relations we used primarily the formula which had been used in the case of the Dominican Republic. We immediately suspended trade in arms and implements of war and then charged the Council of the Organization of American States to study the matter further and to make recommendations as to the possibility of extending this ban to other items, with special attention to items of strategic importance. That resolution got 16 votes. There were 4 abstentions, and it is my impression that the abstentions were based upon the hope that the priority given to items of strategic importance would be made effective and that trade relations which had to do with the health or the basic situation of the Cuban people themselves would not be unduly affected.

There is no question that the present government of Cuba was and is isolated in this hemisphere. They were not joined by any other government on the negative votes which they cast against all of these resolutions. It is also useful to recall that, on the last day of the conference, they themselves demonstrated the notion of withdrawal, self-exclusion, by taking themselves out of the conference. I do believe that this meeting represented a considerable milestone in the development of the OAS system and the recognition of the nature of the threat to the hemisphere.

Differences on How To Solve Problem

Now, we had some differences on which considerable time was spent, but there was no effort to impose solutions. This was a negotiation among independent governments and independent nations—each foreign minister doing his duty as he saw it from the point of view of his own people.

I think we might recall that the nations of the hemisphere were in somewhat different positions during this meeting. Many in and around the Caribbean area—and remember that the United States is a Caribbean country—felt especially concerned, interested, and, some of them, directly threatened by the Castro regime, and they felt very strongly that the Organization should move promptly under the Rio Treaty itself to take such actions as may be necessary to limit the impact

of this threat. There were others, somewhat more remote from that situation, who were not as directly and immediately concerned.

From the point of view of the United States, looking at the purposes of the OAS system, the important countries were those who felt themselves threatened. Even though some of them might have been the smaller countries, we felt that it was important for the OAS to give support to those smaller countries who were threatened by this development. Even while we met at Punta del Este reports came in, some of which have been made public, about incidents or acts of violence which demonstrated the very threat that we were talking about.

So that I think it is also important to bear in mind that this question is very much involved in the internal political situation in each country. We did not feel that it was up to us to try to insist that governments cast votes without regard to the pressing and important situations which they had in their own homelands.

I think that, under the circumstances and the spirit of unanimity which was achieved on all of the underlying points, the meeting was a great success for the OAS as a whole.

Now I will be glad to take your questions.

Juridical and Political Views

Q. Mr. Secretary, you have explained earlier in your discourse that these six votes were based primarily on juridical and technical difficulties and then later on you recognize that the question involved internal political situations in these countries, which seems somewhat of a contradiction. I wonder if you would care to comment on reports that these were really not so much juridical but were policy differences and the fact that a major segment of the hemisphere didn't approve of the exclusion part is likely to have a divisive effect in the OAS in the future.

A. You will recall that, back in December—on December 4th—when the call of this meeting occurred, there were a number of countries who abstained or voted against the call of the meeting. There were some countries who did not believe that the situation called for the application of the Rio Treaty, the treaty of mutual assistance in the hemisphere.

I think this different concept of the meeting had some political bearing on the discussion that oc-

curred at our conference. If you look through the resolutions that were actually passed, I think you will see that an attempt was made not to insist that the provisions of the Rio Treaty were literally being applied, although the conference was meeting under the Rio Treaty and that treaty provided a wholly adequate base for any measures that were taken.

But that difference of view that was expressed in early December did make itself felt during the discussions. No, I think that there is no basic contradiction between the idea that countries have a different juridical view and at the same time have a different political view. After all, the combination of these two points, juridical and political, is not unknown, and I think all of us combine the two from time to time.

Q. Mr. Secretary, if Cuba or Castro's Cuba is now to be excluded from the inter-American system because of the incompatibility of the Communist regime with that system, does this in any way affect our treaty arrangements with Cuba? I refer specifically to the treaty under which we maintain a base at Guantanamo since the purpose of that base now is to protect the inter-American system.

A. The treaty with respect to Guantanamo came into existence long before the creation of the inter-American system, and I would not suppose that the participation or the nonparticipation of the present government of Cuba in the OAS would affect that treaty.

Illicit Traffic In Arms

Q. Mr. Secretary, does the exclusion of arms trade in any way affect the shipment of arms to Cuba from Communist countries?

A. No. These resolutions were dealing with relations within the hemisphere. The resolution to which I referred would not, in itself, affect that trade.

Q. I was about to ask—I understood in your earlier statement, Mr. Secretary, that you spoke of arms trade from other countries that you hoped to interrupt.

A. No, I think I referred to the fact that so far as we know there is no trade in arms from any countries of the American system to Cuba, but we believe that there is illicit traffic in arms from

Cuba to some of these other countries. And, of course, that would be included in this resolution.

Q. Mr. Secretary, are you contemplating now specific steps which would shortly be taken to cut off this illicit trade in arms from Cuba to other countries?

A. Well, that is a matter which will be coming up in the Council of the Organization and undoubtedly will be a matter of concern to this special security committee which we directed the Council to establish at our recent conference.

Q. Is our Navy now working to stop any of this traffic?

A. Well, I think that you can assume that all of the governments most immediately concerned are taking such measures as they can take to be sure that this illicit traffic does not go forward.

Action To Be Taken By OAS Council

Q. Mr. Secretary, what is the immediate juridical situation in the OAS Council when it returns?

A. Well, they have been instructed by these resolutions to do a number of things; but more particularly in connection with the resolution on exclusion, they have been directed to adopt "without delay" the measures necessary to carry out this resolution, and this resolution in effect says that this incompatibility excludes the present government of Cuba from participation in the inter-American system. I would suppose the Council would be meeting fairly soon, because "without delay" is fast.

Q. Mr. Secretary, would you say that the illicit arms shipments from Cuba reflect the Communist arms shipments to Cuba which are then reexported?

A. The reexport of arms from Cuba to other countries in the hemisphere, to subversive or illicit groups, is of course very much on our minds in this situation.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the suggestion has been made that the conference has tended to embarrass the regimes of those countries that abstained at Punta del Este, especially reports from Argentina that there is some turmoil there as a result of it. Would you care to comment on this question of whether those countries have been embarrassed, or the governments of those countries?

A. Well, I think I should say that at the conference we were fully aware of the fact that the internal situation in each country varied somewhat and that this issue of Cuba was much involved in the internal political and public opinion situations in the different countries.

We did not ourselves attempt to judge those by trying to insist in any way that governments vote against their best judgment and appreciation of their own position. There is considerable variety, country by country, if you go down the list, in the impact of this kind of problem within their own political and constitutional system. We tried at the conference not to take the responsibility of trying to press people to make judgments that might be unwise from the point of view of their own situation.

U.S. Trade With Cuba

Q. Mr. Secretary, I have a two-part question. The first part: Do you favor the cutting off of this remaining trade between the United States and Cuba?

A. Well, I wish to get into that now that I am back, and I suspect that you will be hearing something about that in due course.

Q. The second part is how do you square that, even the reconsideration of what remains, trade in food and medicine, with the President's statement that our quarrel is not with the Cuban people, so we don't want to punish them?

A. That is something that will have to be considered, because in a certain sense one has to think about the balances in these trade arrangements. We know from highly reliable intelligence sources that dollars and foreign exchange are being used by the Castro government to promote subversion in other countries, and if trade produces foreign exchange reserves which can be used by the present government of Cuba to strengthen subversive activities in other countries we think we have to take that into account.

Q. Mr. Secretary, isn't a good part of that dollar reserve coming from trade with Canada now? Are we to suggest to the Canadian Government that this trade between Canada and Cuba be stopped?

A. This is something we will have to take up after this meeting. I don't want to comment on that today.

Q. Mr. Secretary, on that point, if you will elaborate on that, to what extent would all the resolutions accepted at the Punta del Este conference be effective without the active participation by Canada?

A. Well, of course, we do hope that other countries having seen the clear expressions of policy and attitude of the Organization of American States would consider—and I am not now referring to any single country—would consider whether they might not align their policies with the policies of the inter-American system. I think we will find that a number of countries will be looking at it from that point of view.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.